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### Interview with Norm Reef by Mike Hastings

Norman 'Norm' S. Reef

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## ***George J. Mitchell Oral History Project***

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**Norman S. "Norm" Reef**  
(Interviewer: *Mike Hastings*)

**GMOH# 080**  
April 3, 2009

**Michael Hastings:** The following is a recorded interview of the Senator George J. Mitchell Oral History Project, an activity of Bowdoin College. I'm Mike Hastings, the interviewer; the date is April 3, 2009. I'm with Norm Reef, the interviewee, and we are at the Eastland Hotel in Portland, Maine. Good morning.

**Norm Reef:** Good morning.

**MH:** Could we begin, could you begin by stating your full name and spelling your last name?

**NR:** Norman S. Reef, R-E-E-F, as in Frank.

**MH:** And what was your date of birth and place of birth?

**NR:** My date of birth is August 16, 1933, right here in Portland, Maine.

**MH:** And what was your father's full name and your mother's full name?

**NR:** My father's name was Samuel Reef; my mother's name was Dora Reef.

**MH:** Can you tell me about your father and mother? How did they come to Portland and what was their stories?

**NR:** Well, my mother was born in Salem, Mass., and her family moved here to Portland. My father was born in Lithuania. At about age fourteen, and I don't know exactly why, but he decided to come to America. He had several sisters here; one of them was in Portland. He took the boat, came across, and at age fourteen he went to work as a shoe cobbler, he worked for a cobbler shop near the center of town, and was making seven dollars a week. He worked there for about a year and he asked his boss for a raise, and the boss said, "We don't need you anymore," and he fired him. And he went to work for another shop on St. John Street, which is the opposite end of town. And living on the east end, every morning he walked from the east end to the west end and he saved some money, he opened his own shop, and that shop he opened was in South Portland.

Now my grandfather, my mother's father, was what in those days they called a peddler, he had horse and wagon, and he would go around neighborhoods and sell dry goods, and he for some

reason stopped into my father's shop with some shoes to repair. They got talking and he found that my father was Jewish and he had a bunch of daughters at home. And so this was a nice candidate -

**MH:** He was a Jewish gentleman as well?

**NR:** Yes – for one of his daughters. So Friday night, every Jewish family in those days had a big Sabbath dinner, and he invited my father to come for Sabbath dinner. The way my father told it, he sat at the table with six or seven daughters and my grandfather says, take your pick, and he wound up marrying my mother, who was a student at Portland High School.

**MH:** I see. How old was your mother then?

**NR:** Oh, probably sixteen or seventeen.

**MH:** Was there a large Jewish community in Portland at the time?

**NR:** Good size, good size. It's much larger today, but it was more closely knit in those days because, first of all, Jewish or not, people didn't, coming out of the Depression, they did not have an automobile. The Italians were clustered in one area, the Irish in another, Jewish people in another, and so everybody was friendly, they went to school together, they socialized together, they went to church or synagogue together, and that was the nature of the communities in the Portland area.

**MH:** What part of Portland was the Jewish community in, living in?

**NR:** First it was in the Newbury Street area and then they moved out to the Munjoy Hill area, the Italians moved into the Newbury, Middle Street area, then from Munjoy Hill they migrated out to the Woodfords area.

**MH:** I took a walk recently up Munjoy Hill and I passed, there is what appears to be a very old synagogue -

**NR:** On Congress Street.

**MH:** On Congress Street. Is that, was that -?

**NR:** That's the one I went to.

**MH:** That was the one you went to. Tell me, is there a story about that? That's a fascinating looking building.

**NR:** Well originally the large synagogue was on Newbury Street, I believe it's either offices or condos now. But you have to understand the Jewish community: you get three of them

together and you have at least two disagreements. So they broke off and started that one on Congress Street that you saw, and a faction broke off from that and opened on Cumberland Avenue, which is now Franklin Arterial. It was taken down when they put the highway through.

**MH:** What was the name of that synagogue on Munjoy Hill?

**NR:** Etz Chaim.

**MH:** What was it like when you were growing up, you grew up in what neighborhood, were in the Munjoy neighborhood?

**NR:** Munjoy Hill, North Street.

**MH:** What was it like growing up?

**NR:** Tough. We had a family of eight kids, I was number six, everybody worked. I can remember the war was on in Portland, I was eight years old – the war wasn't in Portland, it was World War II. In Portland, this was a Naval refueling depot, every ship that went to Europe during World War II stopped here to refuel. We had army forts out in Cape Elizabeth, we had them on the islands, I can remember going to the Exposition Building where they had cots lined up on all sides – soldiers. And my brothers and I used to go shine shoes, when we weren't shining shoes we were on Congress Street selling newspapers. And the paper was three cents, everybody gave us a nickel and said, "Keep the change." And then the newspaper went up to five cents – guess what happened? You get the nickel, no tip. So we did that all through the war.

**MH:** Did you have to, was there blackout restrictions during the war?

**NR:** Absolutely, and we had what we called air raid wardens, we used to have drills. They would sound a siren and everybody would blackout, then the wardens would come out, they'd set fake incendiary bombs on the side of the road and then a crew would come and put it out.

**MH:** What about schools, where did you go to school?

**NR:** I started school in the North School on North Street, which is today a residential building, went to Emerson on Emerson Street, which is a residential building now, Jack Junior which is down the end of North Street, and Portland High School.

**MH:** Portland High School, I see. And do you have any particular teachers you remember particularly from high school days?

**NR:** Well, I have one teacher in the third grade at the Sherwood School, Mary Hamm, and I don't know why she took a liking to me but she did and she was, I don't want to say extremely friendly in any sense other than friendliness, but I was what you call the teacher's pet, and she

was a very devout Catholic and she did not marry. And I know that she used to pray for me, and when I went to sixth grade, she had moved from third to sixth and I had her again in sixth grade, and I've always had an element of luck in my life. And things could have gone either way, and seemed to have gone the right way and I've always wondered, because I'm a strong believer in God, but I always wondered if Mary's prayers didn't have something to do with it.

**MH:** So you have this large family, are most of them still living?

**NR:** No, out of the eight there are only two of us.

**MH:** Did they, did your brothers and sisters live largely in the Portland area, or did they go away?

**NR:** No, they all went away. I'm the only one here. And my surviving sister is in [ ] Palm Springs, California.

**MH:** I see. So what happened after high school?

**NR:** Well, in high school I kind of wasted my time, and in a sense I was bored and I didn't know if I wanted to go to college or not, but my father never had an education, in fact he couldn't read or write English, and he convinced me that I needed to go to college. Not that we had the money to do it, because we struggled. I remember that room and board, tuition, books were \$600.

**MH:** Where was that?

**NR:** Where?

**MH:** At where?

**NR:** Boston University. That was a lot of money, but they struggled and they paid it.

**MH:** Did your mother work as well, or no? She was just at home with all these children.

**NR:** At home with the children, and she used to go to my father's cobbler shop after she finished the work at home, she'd go there and sit with him until it was time to come home. I had a maiden aunt, my father's sister, who lived in Boston, but she worked for an artificial flower manufacturer, and in the summer there's no business for artificial flowers so every April she would come to Maine and live with us and stay until October and go back. She was the cook, the baker, the cleaner. My mother had a hard time boiling water.

**MH:** So did you go off to Boston University?

**NR:** I went off to Boston University; I stayed there for two years and I really wasn't getting

anywhere. And at that time the Korean War was on and I knew if I gave up my student deferment I could get the G.I. Bill, so I went in the army for two years and when I came out I went back to Boston University.

**MH:** Tell me about the army.

**NR:** What is to say about the army?

**MH:** Did you end up in Korea?

**NR:** No, because I personally ended the war.

**MH:** How's that?

**NR:** I was in training, I finished my training, I went to advanced infantry training -

**MH:** Where were those, where did you do that?

**NR:** At Fort Dix, New Jersey, and Camp Pickett, Virginia, and somehow the North Koreans got word that I was coming and they signed a truce and the war ended, so I got shipped to San Antonio, Texas, and became a dental technician.

**MH:** Dental technician? Did you have to take a class for that or -?

**NR:** Oh yes, a three-month course.

**MH:** Why Texas?

**NR:** That's where Fort Sam Houston is, San Antonio, Texas, and that's where the school was. And I thought about becoming a dentist, but frankly, my sciences were not that strong so I decided to go back to Boston University. And ever since I was about eight years old I knew that I wanted to be in public relations, so I was a senior at the School of Public Relations and Communications. I had two brothers in Boston, one graduated Bentley, one graduated Northeastern, we were all in business together.

**MH:** So you weren't too far apart. Because Bentley, if I recall, was right along Commonwealth Avenue, wasn't it?

**NR:** That's correct.

**MH:** It's upstairs. They had, kind of above the stores.

**NR:** That's right, down near the library. And we were in business together, and we were sending a lot of legal work out and my brothers said to me, "Look, we could use an in-house

counsel, why don't you go to law school, and you can take care of that part of the business." So I did.

**MH:** So you were doing public relations work?

**NR:** Right.

**MH:** What kind of clients did you have?

**NR:** No, no, I was studying it. I got my degree in that.

**MH:** Okay, so they were doing the business, okay.

**NR:** Well, we were all doing it, it was insurance finance business. The brother from Northeastern had an insurance license; we used to finance auto insurance premiums. And so the second semester my senior year I switched from public relations, I applied to law school, and I had some good connections, I was president of my fraternity. The faculty advisor happened to be, I forget his exact title, but he was in the position to recommend me to law school that late and I got accepted.

**MH:** What was the name of the fraternity? I'm just curious.

**NR:** Phi Epsilon Pi.

**MH:** Phi Epsilon Pi, and so -?

**NR:** I've been president of every group or organization I ever joined. I don't know why.

**MH:** Phi Epsilon Pi is a national fraternity?

**NR:** It was. I don't know if it's still in existence or not. I don't know why I was president; I guess nobody else wanted the job.

**MH:** Did they have a fraternity house at BU?

**NR:** Oh yes.

**MH:** Did you live in it?

**NR:** Sure.

**MH:** Where was that?

**NR:** On Babcock Street in Brookline. Today, Boston University field is at the foot of

Babcock Street.

**MH:** Okay, I know where that is, yeah. That is near where the old Boston Braves, it was the Braves field. Yeah, okay. So where did you go to law school?

**NR:** BU.

**MH:** Right at BU, okay. Full time or at nights, or?

**NR:** No, full time, and I worked in the afternoon. And then a friend of mine introduced me to a girl that was from Portland and we started to go out and we wound up getting married. And she graduated Emerson, I graduated law school, her parents wanted us to move back to Maine, so I moved back to Portland.

**MH:** I see. And where did you set up, did you have your own practice?

**NR:** I've always had my own practice.

**MH:** Right from the beginning. A single person practice or was it a -?

**NR:** No, when I started out I was single and a friend of mine, Bill Troubh, graduated from the University of Maine. He didn't have a place to go, and I had an extra room so he came into my practice. After a couple of years another lawyer, I don't know if you've ever heard of Herb Bennett, Herb Bennett asked me to come in with him, so I did. We were the founders of the Maine Trial Lawyers Association; there were thirteen of us around the state of Maine. Up in your area I think it was Herb Silsby.

**MH:** From Ellsworth, I think, yes. Did the practice, was it a, did you do everything or did you tend to specialize?

**NR:** Well, did everything. I did most of the trial law, that's what I really enjoyed doing and our practice had been around a couple of years and then I split off from him, formed my own firm again, and in comes George Mitchell.

**MH:** Okay, yes, how did that happen?

**NR:** George Mitchell was with Muskie in Washington. He made his way back to Maine, he went up through the party ranks and decided to run for governor, and [ ] George and Joe Angelone came after me, asking me to support George in the primary. And at that time there was Shep Lee, there was Scott Hutchinson, Chuck Cianchette, and about half a dozen others, formed a finance committee and raised the money for George to run for governor.

**MH:** Was that hard?



**NR:** Not really, because we had a plan. Bob Dunfey did business with a number of people; he would call the people he did business with and get contributions. If somebody said no to Bob, Scott Hutchinson would call – he was president of Key Bank. So we had a plan to go after these people, and we raised the money. We eventually became the finance committee for the Democratic Party and every major candidate that came out of Maine, Democratic candidate, we raised the money for.

**MH:** I'm going to ask you about some of the people that you mentioned. Tell me who Joe Angelone was.

**NR:** Joe Angelone came here from Warwick, Rhode Island, after the war; he and his brother had a chain of pizza places. Joe was very involved in Democratic politics. His pizza parlor, there was not a time that you could go in there and not find a politician. That was the hangout.

**MH:** Where was it?

**NR:** First it was on Monument Square, where One Monument Square is now, then they took that down and moved up to where the, what was the old Strand Theater building, and for most of -

**MH:** Congress Square, right? Right near here?

**NR:** Right down, you go up the end of High Street, turn left on Congress, about two blocks down. Joe was a mover and an extremely likeable guy, and as honest as the day is long in summer. Joe raised money. Joe gave all of the politicians advice on one thing or another. In fact, Joe's wife and George's wife were very friendly, very close. Joe did a lot of driving for George at night, when George would go to speak somewhere, Joe would take him. And there was Scott Hutchinson who, I mean it was a really compatible group of guys. We had a lot of fun together. Chuck Cianchette, Chuck had a fantastic sense of humor. Chuck also had a private plane, and when Muskie was sworn in as secretary of state Chuck flew us all down there and flew back. An interesting thing, we were flying down, what's now Reagan Airport, and the pilot radios in and they said, "Sorry, the airport is closed." I guess we were getting close to seven o'clock or whatever, "You'll have to go to LaGuardia [*sic*: Dulles]." And Chuck got on the phone talking -

**MH:** Did you mean LaGuardia or Dulles?

**NR:** Dulles, yes, I'm sorry, Dulles.

**MH:** Sorry to interrupt you.

**NR:** No, no that's fine, we want to be accurate. Chuck says, "We can't go to Dulles because we're going to a ceremony and we won't have time to get into Dulles." And they said, "Well we can't help it, we can't let you in." And he says, "This is at the White House, we're going down

for Senator Muskie's swearing-in as secretary of state." And the guy says, "Hold on." And we got permission to land at Reagan.

**MH:** That's wonderful. Now who was on that plane?

**NR:** Chuck Cianchette, Scott Hutchinson, Joe Angelone, myself, probably a couple of others, small plane, about six or eight passenger.

**MH:** Great story. Is that the first time you were ever at the White House?

**NR:** I don't think so. I've been at the White House a few times. That was before I went to the White House with Grace when Bill Clinton signed the Family [and Medical] Leave Act.

**MH:** Right. That must have been fun.

**NR:** That was great, and you know what?

**MH:** Now just for the purpose, you're referring to Grace Reef, your daughter.

**NR:** My daughter, who was working for Senator Mitchell at the time.

**MH:** Right, and she was involved in that legislation.

**NR:** Right. According to her, she negotiated it.

**MH:** You got to meet the president?

**NR:** Oh yes. Well, when I went with Grace, strange thing, for about almost five minutes I was *alone* with him in the Rose Garden, and we just chatted about, I think we had a Republican Congress at the time, and we just chatted about how nice it would be to get a Democratic Congress and have a Democratic president, and honestly, the guy made me feel like I had known him for years. He just had that magnetism. And I suppose that's why he got where he went.

**MH:** Sure.

**NR:** But anyway, getting back to Maine, the group supported the politicians. We started, we did Peter Kyros, Bill Hathaway, Ed Muskie, George, Brennan, right up the line.

**MH:** What happened in 1974? Why do you think he failed to, Senator Mitchell failed to win the governorship?

**NR:** I think that they underestimated Longley, and he had a strong base in the Lewiston area, he had been around for years, he had a lot of friends. I don't remember the exact circumstances but I think people were fed up with government and they wanted anybody who would have made

a change. I think that's why he lost.

**MH:** So, Senator Mitchell goes back into private practice after that campaign -

**NR:** And then he becomes U.S. attorney. From U.S. attorney he becomes federal judge. Every politician I know would have been happy as a lark to finish their political career as a federal judge. So here's a federal judge, and a good one, I mean intelligent, had a great understanding of the philosophy behind the law, fair, and everything the people would want in a judge, and I would think that a federal judge would have everything he wanted out of the system alone.

Joe Brennan gets a call from Ed Muskie and he says, "Governor, I have something I want to discuss with you, but I don't want to discuss it over the phone. Can you meet me in Brunswick?" So Joe says, "Yes." So Senator Muskie flew into Brunswick Naval Air Station, they met at the station. The senator told the governor that the president is going to appoint him as secretary of state and that he'd be creating a vacancy for which the governor had an opportunity to fill, and he says, "I won't ask you anything except one thing. Would you ask whoever you appoint to keep my staff so that they're not out of work?" And Joe said, "Yes."

Now, there was a group that formed behind Ken Curtis, and everybody at the time thought, Ken's a former governor, a popular guy, it would be really good if Joe appointed Ken, and then when they come up for election they'd travel around together and we'd get a re-elected governor and re-elected senator. Well, we go to the meeting in Augusta, at the Blaine House, there was a breakfast, and there were about fifteen people that were invited to the meeting, and everybody is talking to the governor about appointing Ken Curtis. The governor doesn't say anything. And at the end he made a few remarks, which I won't repeat, but it was obvious that he was not going to appoint Ken Curtis. And nobody dreamt that George would be a candidate, because he's a federal judge, what the heck, why would he want to become a senator and risk being re-elected for it and lose his federal judgeship? But, Joe appointed George.

**MH:** Was this group of fifteen, was it the same people that you were referring to -?

**NR:** Mostly, Marshall Stern out of Bangor -

**MH:** Marshall Stern, yes. Anybody from northern Maine?

**NR:** Well -

**MH:** In my interviews I haven't ever heard reference to this meeting and it's very interesting, I didn't, that there was a meeting, actually a formal meeting held, okay.

**NR:** Informal.

**MH:** Informal meeting, yes, okay.

**NR:** From northern Maine, I think they were pushing Elmer Violette, and then there was somebody else that worked for the senator.

**MH:** John Martin maybe?

**NR:** No, no. His daughter married somebody from out in Cumberland or Falmouth. I'll think of it anyway, but he made a remark to me years afterwards, because we had never met before, Leon Billings -

**MH:** Oh, Leon Billings, yes.

**NR:** And Leon was pushing for Violette, and Leon made a remark to me, he says, "Oh, you're one of the guys that was pushing George." And so that's how I found out he was pushing Violette - I didn't know that. But George got the job.

I'm sure everybody told you that when it came time for re-election he was like thirty-five or thirty-eight points down in the polls over and overcame it. But I'll tell you one thing, and to me it's the most impressive thing about any politician. George called a meeting and he said, "I want to win, but I will not let anybody misrepresent anything. You're not to stretch the truth, you're not to violate any rules, you're to play the game fair. And if anybody says to you, 'Oh, don't worry about that, George told me it was okay,' I didn't and I won't, and come to me about it." Now coming out of a politician, you can't get any better.

Now as far as, I did some personal legal work for George, and I won't discuss any of it, but as a conclusion, I found him to be fair, honest, and sympathetic.

**MH:** I worked for the Senator for a period of about four years and I was, found it interesting that his favorite activity to relax seemed to be to come back to Portland to go to hockey games.

**NR:** Absolutely, and you know what, when he went to those games he just let it all out. I went to a Celtics game with him in, well I was in Washington but the stadium was outside of Washington, and I've got to say, he was on his feet every minute of the game, yelling and, 'oh yeah, okay, you got 'em, do this,' he just let it all out. And I thought that was great, because he had great responsibilities and he found an avenue to release the tension.

**MH:** Did it surprise you when he got involved with the Red Sox?

**NR:** In a way, but he was very friendly with the Alford family. And all I can think of is Justin, he's a state senator now, but the grandfather -

**MH:** Harold.

**NR:** Harold had been involved with the Red Sox for years. I don't know how George got

involved, but I wouldn't be surprised if there was some connection there. You know, you worked for him, he had an absolutely photographic, I shouldn't say 'had,' I don't want to put it in past tense, he *has* an absolutely photographic memory. I had people come to me and say, "I can't believe it." "Can't believe what?" "Five years ago I met him at city hall, shook his hand, and when I saw him yesterday he remembered my name." And that's in contrast to Senator Muskie, who couldn't remember to tie his shoes. I mean Senator Muskie, every time we had an affair we wore name tags, and if wasn't for the name tags he wouldn't have known anybody's name in that room.

**MH:** Did Senator Mitchell ever talk to you about the time that he worked for Senator Muskie?

**NR:** Not really, no.

**MH:** He only worked for him for about, two, two-and-a-half years, but they seemed to have, it seems that they really formed a great deal of respect for each other.

**NR:** Easy to understand. They were both highly intelligent. George is, Ed was; highly intelligent. They understood things and they understood things together, and it would be easy to see how they could form a true relationship.

**MH:** The staff of a senator rapidly comes to know who the senator's closest friends are. Did you ever get the impression that people tried to use you to get closer to George Mitchell?

**NR:** Only once, and I personally never allowed it. I never made a dime off of being involved in politics. Now, some guys went on to be lobbyists, some guys got contacts and they were in this and did what they did because they gained financially from it. I never did. There was one time when somebody came in to me, as a lawyer, and hired me to defend them in a federal criminal case. George was the U.S. attorney. Now, I never went to George. I know a lot of guys did, a lot of guys would go in and – I want to tell you about this but I want to finish my story – I never went to George, and I never discussed the case with him, and I didn't try it against George, I tried it against one of his assistants. I won the case, and later on I found out the reason they came to me was because I knew George and they figured if they were found guilty, I could get them a lighter sentence.

Now, Marshall Stern was in Bangor, as a good reputable trial lawyer, and George was the federal judge, no, George was U.S. attorney. And the drug cases are a little different; in Maine you ask somebody for a \$500 fee, they say, "Can I give you ten dollars a week?" But the drug dealers, you say that'll be a \$25,000 retainer, boom, it's on the table, they got it. So all the drug dealers that got caught used to go to Marshall, and they knew Marshall was in with George. Well George was really aboveboard, and if a sentence called for five years, George would say, "I want seven." And Marsh would say, "But you got to do something." He'd say, "Well I'll cut it down to five." And that's all he ever did. He never bent for anybody or showed personal favor. I'll tell you, I've told this to so many people throughout my lifetime, there never was and there never will be another politician like George.

**MH:** Your daughter, Grace – how many children do you have?

**NR:** Two.

**MH:** Two, Grace and another daughter?

**NR:** Heidi. Heidi does for a charter school what you do for the University of Maine.

**MH:** Okay, here in Portland?

**NR:** No, in Foxboro, Mass.

**MH:** Grace goes to Colby? Did Grace go to Colby, or?

**NR:** Grace went to Colby.

**MH:** Colby, I've got, pulling that out, I don't know where I came up with that actually, I do, okay, Colby. Did she go to work for George Mitchell right after graduating?

**NR:** No, let me tell you what happened. Grace was a sophomore at Colby, and I was at Joe Angelone's house with George. It was like in January or February, and I don't know what possessed me but I said, "George, can you put Grace on as an intern on this summer?" He says, "Sure." Now, little did I know that that isn't the way you're supposed to do it, you're supposed to go through the staff, Dave Johnson I think was the AA at the time, supposed to get approval from him. Well, George must have gone back, and knowing George, probably sheepishly told Dave, "I hired an intern." Well, along comes the end of April, beginning of May, because I went home and I called Grace and asked her, I said, "I talked to the Senator and you can be an intern. How'd you like to spend a summer in Washington?" She says, "Yeah, [that would] be exciting."

So, now that's in January or February. In May she says to me, "You know dad, I don't know if I want to go to Washington this summer because around school they're saying in the summertime there's not much to do in Washington, it's hot and humid and it's not a good place to be." I said, "Whoa, wait a minute, we made a commitment and there are lots of students that would like to have that internship, and you committed yourself to it. Now you go down there, and you finish it out and then come back." And she says, "Well, okay." But my birthday is August 16th, and the kids were always home for my birthday, and she says, "I'll go down," she says, "but I'm leaving early because I want to be home for your birthday, and I'll be home before August 16th." I said, "That's fine. The only thing I want you to do, is the first day you get there you tell who's ever in charge when you're going to be leaving, so that they can prepare for it." She says, "Okay."

Well, she gets down there and I don't hear from her for the first week, I don't hear from her the second week. Third week I call her up, I said, "Hey, what's going on?" "Oh dad, I love it down here, this is fantastic." She says, "I'm going to transfer schools." "Whoa, wait a minute, you're

going to what?” “I’m going to transfer schools.” “And where do you think you’re going to go?” “I don’t care, I’ll go to George Washington, I’ll go to Catholic University, I’ll go where ever I can go to be down here.” I said, “No you won’t, you started at Colby and you’re going to finish at Colby, and so finish up the summer and come back.” She says, “Well I will, but let me tell you right now, I won’t be home for your birthday.”

**MH:** That’s a good story.

**NR:** She says, “And when I come home I’ve only got one day to be with you, then I’m going back to school.” And I said, “That’s okay, as long as you’re happy, that’s all I want.” So she came back. And she’s going along, I see her now and then. In about February she says, “I’m going back to Washington this summer.” “Oh great,” I says, “are you going to intern?” “Nope.” “You’re not? What are you going to do?” “I’m going to get me a full time job.” I said, “Whoa, wait a minute, we went through this last year. I told you, you started at Colby you’re going to finish at Colby.” She says, “I am.” I said, “No you’re not, you’re a junior, you’ve got another year to go.” She said, “No I don’t. I dropped the newspaper and I dropped the yearbook” and whatever else she was involved in, “and I doubled my courses and I’m graduating in June.” I said, “Okay.” Now, she never lied to me and I had no reason to doubt her, but for some reason I called Sandy Maisel.

**MH:** Sandy Maisel is a professor of - ?

**NR:** Professor, but he was also her advisor, and he was head of the government department. I said, “Sandy, is Grace graduating in June?” He says “Yup, she told us she was doubling her courses, we tried to talk her out of it but she wouldn’t listen, and she’s graduating.” And he says, “We are re-examining the curriculum, because you’re not supposed to be able to do that.” And she did, she graduated and went back to Washington. George did not have an opening. She worked at an ice cream shop and she floated around, she worked for Kennedy, she worked for Dodge, she worked for a number of guys for short periods, and then an opening came in George’s office and she went.

I know this is mainly about George and not Grace, but I want to tell you this. Somewhere around that period, Joe Biden was being talked up as running for president. Grace was without a job, and she heard that Biden needed a driver so she called me, she said, “Do you think I should apply?” I said, “Sure, why not?” She said, “Well I don’t like him.” I said, “Well do this: apply, see if you get the job, and meanwhile stay after the others and if you get somebody else, you can take the other job.” So she applied at the Biden office. Now, you know the routine, you go from one to the other to be approved. She finally gets to the AA, he approves her. He says, “Yes, I think you’d be good but I can’t hire you without you meeting the senator. So Saturday morning would you be willing to go up to Delaware and meet the senator at his home?” So she says, “Yes, I’ll do that.” So she goes up to Biden’s house and she sits down and he interviews her and he says, “You fit the bill,” he says, “I think you’re going to do well, you have the job.” And she says, “Well senator, thank you, I’ll let you know on Monday morning.” That must have thrown him for loop because once you go through the staff you just assume that the applicant wants the

job. So she didn't take it.

**MH:** She didn't take it?

**NR:** No.

**MH:** That would have been 1984 -?

**NR:** About that.

**MH:** The second Reagan, the beginning of the second Reagan term. So tell me, what have you been doing since - When did you stop practicing law?

**NR:** 1989.

**MH:** What have you been doing since?

**NR:** I had, at that time I had, well you got to know my family history. All my siblings died between age fifty-eight and sixty-two, and I was getting up there. And I had all the money that I could use, and maybe somebody else didn't think it's enough but I was happy with it. And I had been going to Florida since 1972, first I went for a week, then two weeks, then I went for a month, I decided I'm going to retire and enjoy the last few years I have. So I retired, I went to Florida, that was '89.

'Ninety, '91, we go into a recession. A lot of my finances were in real estate, they went south. And I got a call from one of my partners and he said, we had a residential care facility, and he says, "One of our partners is stealing," he says, "if you don't come back we're not going to have anything left." So I came up to see what was going on, found out the partner *was* stealing, threw him out, ran the facility for a couple years.

**MH:** Now that's a residential care right here in Portland?

**NR:** In Westbrook.

**MH:** In Westbrook, I see, how many beds?

**NR:** Thirty-four. So I'm at the residential care facility, when one of my former clients comes to see me. And he said, "I've got a friend who has an idea, and the idea is a high temperature furnace which can burn industrial waste and produce electricity." And I said, "Okay, what do you want?" He said, "I need you to help me raise some money." Well, I represented the guy, and I had doubts about him and I thought it was a scam so I ignored him. And for about, every two or three weeks for about eight months he kept coming back to see me, and one morning I woke up and I said, "You're a fool. You spent your whole life listening to people and helping them solve problems, you're not even listening to this guy." So I invited him back, and I met the



guy with the idea. And I found out that he was, in his younger years he was a monk, that he was a devout Catholic, that he was a brilliant nuclear physicist, that he worked at Brookhaven Labs in New York, that he was part of the team that put together a process that was later used to clean up the Three Mile Island accident, and maybe there's something to this. So I called some engineer friends and I told them what the idea was, and they said other people have tried it and nobody's been successful with it. But if you ever could put it together, it would be accepted worldwide.

**MH:** What kind of industrial waste are we talking about?

**NR:** Any dry organic material, and some inorganic material; [it] can burn metal. So I became interested, I helped him to raise some funds, helped him to organize things and put it together, and we're now patented in the United States and thirty-three other countries, just about ready to come to market, and granted by Maine Technologies twice. It's a tube about five feet high, twenty-one inches in diameter, reaches a flame temperature of forty-five hundred degrees, can produce up to three million BTUs an hour, and through our experiments we've been able to eliminate nitrogen oxide emissions, unless the nitrogen is in the fuel itself, and we can eliminate carbon dioxide. And the look you just gave me, everybody gives me that look, they say, "If you burn carbon you cannot eliminate carbon dioxide." We can.

**MH:** Is the purpose to eliminate waste or to generate heat?

**NR:** Both, or electricity. I know this is, go to the website.

**MH:** Is it similar to like a pulse furnace that used, for the V-1, you know the missiles that went from -

**NR:** No.

**MH:** They're a pulse furnace. What does the waste look like after it's burned? Is it powder?

**NR:** It's powdered when it goes in, that's why we can reach the temperatures that we can reach because, instantaneous burning. The website's on there and describes the whole thing [and] shows you pictures.

**MH:** Mr. Reef's given me his card, Maine Microfurnace, an environmentally friendly company, Portland, Maine. I'll pass this on to the project. But you mentioned earlier, you said that we will never see the likes of a politician like George Mitchell again. What do you think makes him really stand out?

**NR:** Character, character.

**MH:** How is that expressed?

**NR:** Well first of all, somebody that's willing to live by the rules. Secondly, and maybe it's

not part of character, he's a very intelligent guy. He can see through things, and what he can't see through in the beginning he can think through. He has a great sense of humor, great sense of humor, and he's very loyal. You do something for him, he never forgets it. And he's not one of these guys that, 'what have you done for me lately?' He's a guy, 'I know what you've done for me in the past.' I have met and been friendly with a lot of politicians, and I've just never come across anybody like him. By the way, our birthdays are about five days apart.

**MH:** Is that right. Is there, I usually, as we get toward the end of an interview I usually ask, is there some story you'd like to tell or anything there that we haven't talked about that I haven't given you a good opportunity to bring up?

**NR:** Well, you've given me lots of opportunity. I've given you a lot more than I thought I would. The stories, I don't have much more to add except, when a guy can make you feel comfortable, and I think he's often told of his background, often, and I think that he means it, and I think that he probably has deep rooted lessons in the experiences of growing up, because, the reason I say that is, his brothers and sisters are the same way. His sister is just a fantastic person. Barbara is a great friend and a good person, and then Johnny, and then he had a brother that passed away.

**MH:** Robbie. Mr. Reef, thank you very much, this has been great. I appreciate it.

**NR:** Been a pleasure doing it.

**MH:** And I know that Bowdoin appreciates it as well, and thank you.

**NR:** My brother is a, let's see, a '54 or '55 graduate of Bowdoin.

**MH:** So he was a contemporary with George Mitchell then.

**NR:** Yes, he was a [James] Bowdoin scholar all the way.

**MH:** What was his name?

**NR:** George.

**MH:** George Reef. Thank you very much, Norman Reef.

End of interview